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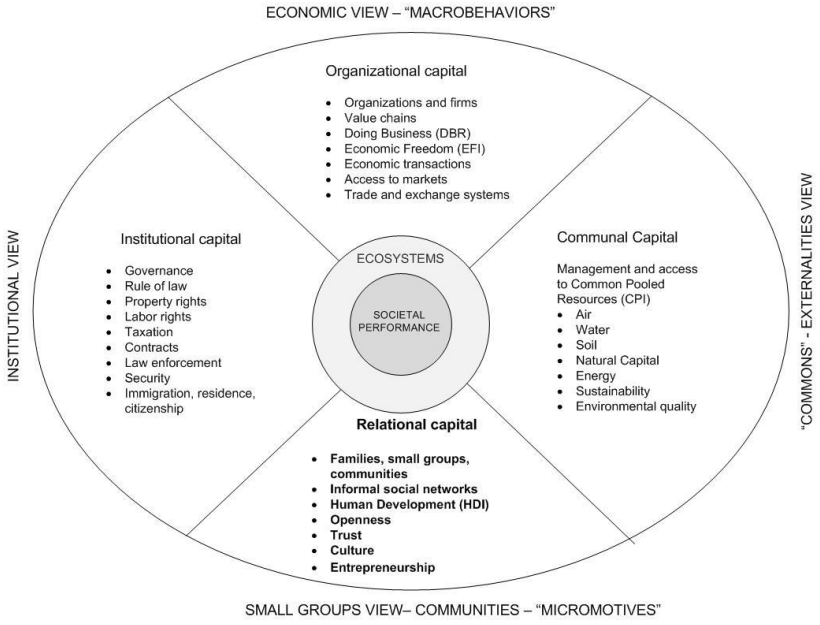
Kaufman Award
Social Impact

RKA AWARDS (2026). CANDIDATE – CATEGORY: ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE (COMMONS)

Full Submission Dossier

Rationale for the RKA Category "Commons / Environmental Performance"



Purpose of the category.

This category recognizes initiatives that measurably improve the **governance and performance of shared environmental assets**—soil, water, forests, air—by aligning **micro** (household), **macro** (organizational/territorial), and **mega** (societal/ecosystem) results. It draws on the **Societal Performance** framework—relational, organizational, and institutional dimensions acting across micro–macro–mega levels—to assess whether projects convert environmental **commons** into sustained public value through rules, incentives, and capabilities that endure beyond funding cycles.

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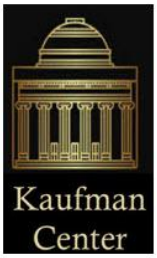

Conceptual grounding.

- **Rachel Carson** highlighted the hidden externalities of degraded ecosystems and the need for science-based, precautionary stewardship of the natural commons (Carson, 1962).
- **Elinor Ostrom** showed that communities can **successfully govern common-pool resources** with clear boundaries, participatory rules, monitoring, graduated sanctions, conflict-resolution, and nested (polycentric) institutions (Ostrom, 1990).
- **Hardin's "tragedy of the commons"** frames the failure mode when individual incentives are misaligned with collective resource health (Hardin, 1968). The standard, therefore, prizes **institutional designs** that avoid tragedy by **internalizing externalities** and **rewarding cooperative behavior**.

References (APA)

- Carson, R. (1962). *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science, 162*(3859), 1243–1248.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bernardez, M. (n.d.). *Societal Performance: An Introduction*. (User-provided manuscript).

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Candidate — AlVelAl Regenerative Agriculture & Anti-Desertification Program (Andalucía & Murcia, Spain)

Prepared for the RKA Evaluation Committee
Prepared by: **Kaufman Center Think Tank**

1. Institutional Presentation

Institution: Asociación AlVelAl
Director: Ms. Catalina Casanova
Web: https://alvelal.es / https://commonland.com

Mission (per institutional scope):
To regenerate the economy, ecology, and community fabric of the Altiplano Estepario — one of Europe's most vulnerable semi-arid regions — by restoring soil, biodiversity, and livelihood through **regenerative agriculture** and **4 Returns** landscape transformation.

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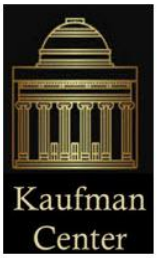

Needs and Problems Addressed
• Severe desertification and soil degradation in southeastern Spain
• Economic abandonment: youth outmigration, rural depopulation
• Water scarcity, drought stress, reduced productivity
• Low-value commodity dependence (almonds, olives)
• Social disconnection and loss of local stewardship

Strategic Response
Create **profitable regenerative business models** that:

1. Improve the land
2. Improve incomes
3. Rebuild community identity
4. Secure the future of the territory

2. Social Impact Results

(Products/services → beneficiary results → sustainability → metrics)
Aligned explicitly with the Guidelines structure:

2.1 Products and Services of Social Impact

• Regenerative olive and almond cultivation
• Soil and water infrastructure (swales, cover crops, terraces)
• Natural vegetation corridor restoration
• Micro-enterprises and cooperatives for climate-resilient production
• Certifiable regenerative brands with premium pricing (e.g., Habitat EVOO)

These **work** by turning ecological restoration into **value-added production**.

2.2 Benefits for Direct Beneficiaries

(Kaufman Ideal Vision — security → self-sufficiency → opportunity)

• Higher and more resilient yields with lower inputs
• Higher profit margins through value-added products
• Increased entrepreneurship and employment for young farmers

- Community identity and pride regained
- Reduced water vulnerability through improved soil retention

Local farmers **gain agency** over their economic destiny.

2.3 Sustainability for the Organization

- Stable revenue from differentiated, regenerative products
- Growing EU and global demand for sustainability-certified goods
- Strategic alliances with Commonland and EU programs
- Long-term master plan (to 2050) with scaling trajectory

Regeneration **funds regeneration**.

2.4 Performance Indicators and Metrics

Indicator	Status / Achievements	Verification
Farmers transitioned to regenerative practices	216+	Commonland
Land under regenerative management	14,500+ hectares	Commonland
Municipalities impacted	76	FAO Mountain Partnership
Region covered	>1,000,000 hectares	landscapes.global
New regenerative businesses	43+	AlVelAl activity reports
Youth engagement	Increasing participation in cooperatives	Local partner data

3. RKA Standards Evaluation

(Full detail across all 13 standards)

Standard	Evidence in AlVelAl Initiative	Rating
1. Focus on outcomes	Clear ecological & socio-economic gains	Excellent
2. Systems view	Agriculture + ecology + entrepreneurship	Excellent
3. Partnerships	Community, cooperatives, municipalities, Commonland	Excellent
4. Needs Assessment	Based on soil loss & agrarian decline	Strong
5. Performance Analysis	Soil, yield, biodiversity monitoring	Strong

6. Systems Design	4 Returns model optimized for drylands	Excellent
7. Requirements alignment	EU sustainability & Spanish regional strategies	Excellent
8. Solution design selection	Business-led ecological restoration	Strong
9. Implementation management	Multi-region coordination & farmer training	Strong
10. Evaluation	Annual reporting and field validation	Strong
11. Micro Results	Income resilience & social capital recovery	Excellent
12. Macro Results	Landscape & territorial revitalization	Excellent
13. Mega Results	Mediterranean and EU replication relevance	High

Overall RKA Fit:
Excellent — with strong potential as a **reference for semi-arid agriculture worldwide**.

4. System Transformation

4.1 Micro → Macro → Mega progression

- Micro: Farmer profitability and workforce renewal
- Macro: Regional pride, rural retention, ecosystem recovery
- Mega: EU-level policy influence on regenerative standards

4.2 Business-Ecology Synergy

Ecological restoration → better soil → higher prices → reinvestment → larger restoration footprint

A virtuous performance loop.

5. Governance & Sustainability Model

- Farmer-led governance supported by technical advisory
- Market incentives ensure long-term continuity
- Multi-stakeholder participation creates resilience
- A 20-year plan reduces policy risk and donor exposure
- Organizational learning embedded in cooperative networks

Economic sustainability advances **environmental sovereignty**.

6. External Recognition

- Featured in global regenerative agriculture coalitions
- Recognized as a model for Europe's desertification crisis
- Backed by credible international partners (Commonland, FAO)

This enhances evaluability and peer learning.

7. Contact Information

Ms. Catalina Casanova
Director — Asociación AlVelAl
Almería, Andalucía, Spain
Email: dir-gerente@alvelal.es
Website: https://alvelal.es
Commonland partner website: https://commonland.com/landscapes/

8. Conclusion & Recommendation

AlVelAl is a **high-quality RKA Award contender** and a globally relevant demonstration of **resilient agriculture**. Its innovative regenerative model:

- Reverses ecological decline
- Strengthens economic resilience
- Revitalizes rural identities
- Provides scalable Mediterranean mitigation strategy

Recommendation: Strongly recommended for advancement to RKA Award finalist.